



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

March 25, 2005

News Release

GEORGIA MAN CHARGED WITH SMUGGLING U. S. CURRENCY

Suspect could face 5 years in prison, \$250,000 fine and forfeiture of currency

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – A federal grand jury yesterday indicted a Georgia resident for Bulk Cash Smuggling, following a joint investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Bessemer Police Department.

Juan Manual Gonzalez, 30, of Lawrenceville, Ga., was charged March 24 on a one-count indictment filed in U.S. District Court in Birmingham. Michael A. Holt, special agent-in-charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); U.S. Attorney Alice H. Martin, Northern District of Alabama; and Nathaniel Rutledge Jr., Chief of Police, Bessemer Police Department, made the announcement.

The indictment charged Gonzalez with transporting and transferring, and attempting to transport and transfer, \$155,650 in U. S. currency, which had been hidden in a concealed compartment of a vehicle he drove southbound on Interstate 59 in Bessemer, with intent to evade the currency-reporting laws of the United States. If convicted, Gonzalez could face up to five years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, and forfeiture of the currency.

"This is a perfect example of the outstanding cooperation between ICE and local and state law enforcement agencies. Because of this type of inter-agency cooperation, money smugglers and other criminals are discovering how difficult it is for them to hide their illegal activities from authorities," said Michael A. Holt, special agent-in-charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in New Orleans. "We are dedicated to identifying and dismantling these types of criminal operations wherever and whenever we find them."

"The newly created Patriot Act legislation, which was signed into law in 2001, arms the government with a new criminal provision which punishes a person for violating currency-reporting statutes. Before passage of the Act, law enforcement officers seized the hidden currency, but were forced to let the offender go without a charge. We will continue to prosecute those caught trying to conceal large quantities of currency in violation of Federal law," said U.S. Attorney Alice H. Martin.

The Bessemer Police Department and ICE investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Brad Felton will prosecute the case.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment contains charges only. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's responsibility to prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.